

pets, that one gets nothing out of them. This is not altogether fair. They have many pretty tricks which it is interesting to watch. Did you ever see a baby cut a tooth? Figure-skaters and vocalists might learn much from it. It begins on the outside edge, goes through a series of the most graceful convulsions, and ends on the high G. Or, if tricks are not practical enough to please these captious critics, I may point out that babies taste very much like young dairy-fed pork. They make, in fact, a capital breakfast dish, as every epicure knows.

### THE DRAMA.

COMING out of the Vaudeville the other night, half pleased, half irritated, by *Woodbarrow Farm*, I confided my doubts and difficulties to a companion. Mr. Jerome's new play, you must know, is (to borrow a word invented by Théophile Gautier for some of the theatrical experiments of George Sand) a ruro-drama. Its hero is a young Devonshire farmer, a Country Mouse who becomes—for a time and much to his own discomfort—a Town Mouse. "Why," I asked, "do our dramatists always insist on putting back the clock at least three-score years and ten in their dealings with stage-rusticity? Why is Mr. Jerome's young farmer of to-day, in his dialect, his costume, and his behaviour, an obviously impossible survival of the old stage-coach England? The *fin-de-siècle* farmer, as I conceive him, is a person of supreme elegance, a graduate of an agricultural college, a student, maybe, of Schopenhauer, probably a subscriber to the *Vie Parisienne*, and undistinguishable in dress and deportment (except, perhaps, by his more Grandisonian manner) from a City stockbroker or a Harley Street doctor. I want to see this man on the stage. But I do not ask too much. At a pinch, the farmer of middle-Victorian literature would suffice me, the farmer of George Eliot, George Meredith, or Thomas Hardy. This man has not yet been shown on the stage; and him, too, I would be content to see. But the actual stage-farmer, the lout who always talks broad Lancashire (in Devon), who always wears velveteens and gaiters, who always scoops up the gravy with his knife—why is this absurd creature still palmed off on playgoers as the real article?" My companion's answer was short and solemn: "It is one of the immutable conventions of the theatre."

Immutable? Let us distinguish. There are two obviously distinct sets of stage-conventions. (1) Conventions which arise from the material conditions of the stage itself; conditions of space and time. Events which happen in many different places and over a period of years have to happen in one and the same place, and within, at the most, a period of three hours. No one objects to these conventions; for abolish them and you abolish the theatre along with them. Thus, in *Woodbarrow Farm*, our young farmer is seen at one moment in St. James's Street, and, five minutes later, in his farm on Exmoor. No one is surprised, for this is one of those conventions of dramatic action which are immutable. (2) There are conventions which spring from the fact that a play is something which has to be played, and that not before a handful of literary "mandarins," but a mixed audience of average men and women. These conventions represent the dramatist's concessions to the supposed mental and moral limitations of the average crowd; and their name is legion. *E.g.*, a play must be moral, because a crowd (an aggregate of individuals each under the eye of his neighbours) is always moral; it must be optimistic, because no crowd is pessimistic; it must not be constructed on "art for art's sake" principles, because a crowd is not artistic; its history must be picture-book history ("Louis XI. always kneeling before the images in his hat; Marie Stuart always in tears; Richelieu always cunning"—as Flaubert says), because that is the only history of the crowd—

and so on. These, observe, are all conventions of dramatic characterisation. It is these which are the real cause of the inferiority of the stage, which always relegate it to the position of "wooden spoon" in the Tripes of the Arts. But they are not immutable. For the crowd changes. It is the dramatists who refuse to change. They regard their audience as composed of Rip van Winkles, or as the petrified courtiers in the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty, and they serve up to the crowd of to-day the conventions demanded by the crowd of fifty years ago.

That Mr. Jerome should have shared this strange delusion of his class is enough to make one rub one's eyes with amazement. For Mr. Jerome is the author of "Stage-Land," one of the most scathing satires on stage-conventions ever written. It seems unkind to condemn Mr. Jerome out of his own mouth; but there is no help for it, for in his book he has supplied us in advance with the severest criticism on his own play. I take up "Stage-Land," and under the heading "The Adventuress" I read:—

"She sits on a table, and smokes a cigarette. A cigarette on the stage is always the badge of infamy. She seems a smart business woman, and she would probably get on very well if it were not for her friends and relations. They never leave her, never does she get a day or an hour off from them. Wherever she goes, there the whole tribe goes with her. They all go with her in a body when she calls on her young man, and it is as much as she can do to persuade them to go into the next room, even for five minutes, and give her a chance. . . . She is fond of married life is the adventuress, and she goes in for it pretty extensively. . . . She dresses magnificently," etc. etc.

I turn to *Woodbarrow Farm* and find this description realised to the letter—or rather to the cigarette, the table, the tribe of friends, the husbands, and the dresses. Again, I find in the book:—

"As for the young man who is coming home to see his girl, you simply can't kill him. He gets stabbed, and shot, and thrown over precipices, and, bless you, it does him good—it is like a tonic to him. He is for ever being reported as dead, but it always turns out to be another fellow who was like him, or who had on his (the young man's) hat. He is bound to be out of it, whoever else may be in."

Substitute "claim his estate" for "see his girl," and once more you get Mr. Jerome, on Mr. Squeers's principles, after spelling "w-i-i-d-e-r" in the book, "going and cleaning it" in the play. The invulnerable young man, the stabbing, the shooting, the precipice, the false reports, the other fellow who was like him—all are there. Just one more collation. "Stage-Land" says:—

"The hero has his own way of making love. He always does it from behind. The girl turns away from him, and he breathes his attachment down her back."

Exactly what happens in the wooing of the adventuress by the farmer-hero in *Woodbarrow Farm*. But the book omits one curious detail of stage-courtship. Your conventional hero induces the heroine to suppose that he is wooing her, when all the time he is merely rhapsodising over the charms of another lady—the adventuress, of course. This omission the play is careful to supply.

Yet below these "lowest deeps" of convention, Mr. Jerome can find for us "a lower deep." Before railways were, playgoers liked to have the stage-rustic widely differentiated from the stage-cockney. For him the country was God-made, idyllic, the town, man-made and vicious. The good folk of Devon were as unlike Londoners as though they inhabited another planet. Mr. Jerome, ignoring the "Flying Dutchman," copies the old picture, and gives it to us for the truth of to-day. Upwards of two centuries ago Molière showed us the elephantine gambols of a vulgar, loutish M. Jourdain, trying to learn gentility from dancing masters and valets. Mr. Jerome (not exactly a Molière, and writing some little time after 1660) puts his loutish hero through precisely the same paces. All this because Mr. Jerome, like his fellow-playwrights and my solemn friend, suffers from the *idée fixe* that the conventions of the stage are immutable. Or has Mr. Jerome produced his play as an object-lesson in the faults satirised by his book, so

constituting himself his own Spartan Helot? If so, the joke is a dangerous one. Or perhaps, after all, Mr. Jerome expects us to accept *Woodbarrow Farm* in all good faith on the principle of the credulous Oriental who, when it was suggested to him that the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments" were not exactly gospel-truth, asked—"Why should a man sit down and write so many lies?"

It is only fair to add that the play, despite its absurd conventionalisms, has many points of interest, and that it was enthusiastically received by the first-night audience. The melodramatic part of its story is cleverly contrived, particularly in the death-scene of the "other fellow," and in the crisis of the play, when the "invulnerable young man" is prevented by a ruse of the hero's from slaying the cigarette-smoking adventuress's husband. And the acting is more than tolerable. Miss Vane plays the adventuress adventurously. Mr. Thomas Thorne modestly contents himself with the small part of the valet to whom the hero is no hero. A Devonshire farmer's dame, Mrs. Poyser-and-water, finds an admirable exponent in Miss Emily Thorne. And (here is the final stroke of irony) Mr. Bernard Gould, who (as Mr. Bernard Partridge) illustrated "Stage-Land," finds himself cast for the hero of *Woodbarrow Farm*. To make the joke complete, it only remains for Messrs. Jerome and Partridge to reissue their book, with the play as an appendix, and the sub-title "Every Artist his own Model."

A. B. W.

## THE WEEK.

THERE is probably not much truth in the rumour that IBSEN proposes to visit England this year. MR. BUCHANAN knows nothing on the subject. Still, IBSEN, who has hitherto neglected us in his wanderings over Europe, may be curious to know something of the little band of British zealots who have honoured him above most of their own stage gods. Who amongst us has any idea what impression was made upon him by our reception of *A Doll's House*, and the subsequent flooding of the English book market with translations, at popular prices, of all his best-known dramas?

ONE of the most interesting series published in any magazine last year were the papers on "The Sovereigns of Europe," which appeared in the *Leisure Hour*. In the January number of the same magazine is commenced a companion series on "The Statesmen of Europe." The first article is devoted to Italy, and contains a most masterly sketch of CRISPI—shrewd, penetrating, and uncompromising, and with an occasional touch of humour, as that "... it is only needful to see him in the Camera, where the spectators from the Tribunes, in the colour more or less intense of the Premier's bald head, have a sure thermometer for estimating his mental state of excitement." Having read the article, one is half disposed to accept the extraordinary story told by a London correspondent last week, describing a visit which LORD DUFFERIN is said to have paid to SIGNOR CRISPI, when the latter, instead of rising to receive the English Ambassador, kept his seat at table and flourished his fingers by way of salutation; LORD DUFFERIN, frozen with Ambassadorial dignity, remaining "motionless on the threshold." Any way, the anonymous critic in the *Leisure Hour* reminds us that CRISPI is "blunt and rough to a degree unusual in an Italian."

THEIR anonymity is a feature of these articles. The one in question is said to be from the pen of PROFESSOR VILLARI, of Florence (SAVONAROLA's biographer), one of the most cultivated and charming men in Italy. He took part with GARIBALDI in

the Sicilian Revolution, knew MAZZINI and CAVOUR, and talks delightfully of those picturesque and stirring days. The Professor and his handsome and clever English wife (the author of several novels) are the centre of the English colony in Florence, and have welcomed in their pleasant home most English and American men of letters who have visited that city.

THE gentleman who explains the crooked ways of Unionism in the Irish leaders in the *Times* must have employed a spare moment in writing the editorial comment on MR. IRVING's letter in Monday's issue of that journal. MR. IRVING complained that *Ravenwood* had been quite unwarrantably described by the *Times* as a "failure." "Not at all," said the special hair-splitter; "we called it a comparative non-success." This reminds us of certain explanations of Unionist defeats in bye-elections. "Comparative non-success" would be an excellent description of the reasoning of the *Times* on most subjects. There are other gems of logic in the reply to MR. IRVING, and we hope they will be added as a glittering pendant to the reprint called "The Parnellite Split."

MR. MONTAGU CRACKANTHORPE probably never made a joke in his life. Consequently he was much annoyed to find himself announced to preside over certain frolics of the Hammersmith Liberal Unionist Association. The programme consisted of "(1) Dead March over the Coffin of Home Rule. (2) Hallelujah Chorus before the Triumphal Car of the Unionist Government." The genius who invented this sprightly entertainment must have been sorely discomfited when he learnt that MR. CRACKANTHORPE declined to be associated with such "objectionable" proceedings. So a card had to be issued to the Liberal Unionists of Hammersmith, who were informed that the festivities were indefinitely postponed. No doubt MR. CRACKANTHORPE thought he was expected to lead a "hallelujah chorus" and dance on an actual coffin.

DR. PARKER objects to the removal of religious disabilities for the purpose of enabling Catholics to hold the offices of Lord Chancellor and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. At first sight this looks like the natural prejudice of a Nonconformist against Popery, but DR. PARKER explains that his position is political, not religious. He thinks a Catholic Lord Chancellor would be subject to the Pope and not to the Queen. SIR CHARLES RUSSELL, for instance, would take his orders from the Vatican. Such a proposition, it might be thought, has only to be stated to expose its own absurdity. But DR. PARKER is quite in earnest, and reinforces himself with a quotation from MR. GLADSTONE's famous pamphlet on the Vatican Decrees. Even DR. PARKER, however, might remember that MR. GLADSTONE wrote that pamphlet when Papal Infallibility was regarded as a new force in politics, and that the course of events both in England and Ireland, especially in Ireland, has since made it clear that the Papacy has no political authority whatever. To say that a Catholic Lord Chancellor would place his allegiance to the Pope above his allegiance to the Queen, or that he would ever trouble his head for one moment about the Pope's opinion of English politics, is now sheer nonsense.

WHEN BLÜCHER appealed to his soldiers struggling with the difficulties of the march to Waterloo, "not to let him be a promise-breaker: he had given his word to WELLINGTON," to what did he refer? There is no trace in the correspondence between BLÜCHER and the Duke of any promise, nor any indication that WELLINGTON knew when to expect BLÜCHER on the 18th. COLONEL MAURICE thinks that the promise in question was given by BLÜCHER



to WELLINGTON personally, founding his belief on a story—said to have been told by the Duke himself in 1833—that WELLINGTON visited BLÜCHER in his tent on the night of the 17th, riding twenty-eight miles between Waterloo and Wavre. There is a hiatus in the accepted history of the Waterloo campaign. This story fits it exactly; it comes from several quarters, and in all cases from people who did not know the bearing of their own record; it is full of circumstantial detail, and the contradictions of it fail in point of statement and argument. Here is certainly a cumulative amount of probability. Like COLONEL MAURICE, however, we shall wait for more evidence on the subject.

THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE, who preceded LORD GRENVILLE in the sinecure office of Auditor of the Exchequer, when he gave an appointment, charged the salary with an annual sum payable to his butler, or some other dependent, and this charge was known as a "rider." MR. H. W. CHISHOLM, late Warden of the Standards, whose "Recollections" are appearing in *Temple Bar*, tells us of even stranger things that used to be done in the good old times. The supply of stationery, he says, formed a nice little perquisite to Civil servants in his father's time. Stationery to a certain amount was allowed to each clerk, and at the end of the year, any surplus over the cost of the stationery actually supplied was credited to the clerk by the contractors. He could take out this amount for anything he chose. MR. CHISHOLM's father took out *his* surplus in books, and in this way obtained the "Encyclopædia Britannica," GIBBON's "Decline and Fall," HUME and SMOLLETT's "England," and other works, handsomely bound, which are now in his son's bookcases. "Rare times these, Mr. Rigmorole!" "Pretty much like our own, Mrs. Quickly!"

A SQUABBLE has been going on for a century between the Cubans and Dominicans as to which possess the bones of ST. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS—have readers forgotten that "El Almirante" was canonised? COLUMBUS was first buried at Valladolid; then his bones were removed to Seville; and then to St. Domingo in the West Indies. The Cubans say that when St. Domingo was temporarily ceded to the French, the bones of COLUMBUS, with those of his brother and son, were taken to Havana; the Dominicans assert that only the bones of the brother and son were removed. There the quarrel rests; but MR. ARTHUR MONTEFIORE has a curious story to tell which bears testimony to the Dominican side of the argument.

NOT long ago an American showman, with a recommendation from an American consul, applied to the Dominican Government for a lease of the bones of COLUMBUS. The showman was prepared to hire a guard of soldiers, and to pay for the services of four priests. In return he guaranteed the Dominican Government not less than twenty thousand dollars per annum, and more in the event of a great success. The President of St. Domingo refused, regarding the proposal "as a shameful profanation." Why he should have thought it necessary to say so, it is difficult to understand; but no Cuban thought of saying that the President couldn't hire what he hadn't got.

PROVINCIALISM may be described as a disorder of the vision in which things are seen out of all perspective—disproportionately great or disproportionately little. Londoners are said to be the most provincial people on the face of the earth, but we incline to the more common opinion that the American—the cultured Bostonian as well as the dollar-hunting New Yorker—is your true provincial. The disproportionate point of view has not had such fine expression

as in JULIAN HAWTHORNE's "New Spanish Inquisition" since EMERSON and MARGARET FULLER held their famous dialogue about FANNY ELSSLER's dancing.

ON Wednesday next the Royal Academy will proceed to fill up several of the vacancies which have occurred in their ranks. Peculiar interest attaches to these elections, because of the very unusual press of talent at the gates of Burlington House. Owing to the mode of election—a triple ballot—it is almost idle to attempt any forecast of results. MR. ALFRED GILBERT, sculptor, and MR. GOW, subject-painter, are designated by the majority of the speculative for promotion to the full honours of Academicianhip. MR. STANHOPE FORBES, in whom NEWLYN would be honoured, and MR. J. M. SWAN, the animal painter, are said to be the most likely candidates for the vacant associateship. Surprises often occur in Burlington House ballotings. Amongst the possibilities are MR. GEORGE CLAUSEN, who would be taken to represent the New English Art Club; MR. ALBERT GOODWIN, MR. ALFRED HUNT, or even perhaps a more official representative of the Water Colour Societies; MR. LOGSDAIL of Venetian and "Ninth of November" fame; the Americans, MR. SARGENT the surpassingly clever and audacious, MR. SHANNON the elegant lady's limner, and MR. GEORGE HITCHCOCK of "Tulip" reputation; the black-and-white men, MESSRS. TENNIEL, LINLEY SAMBOURNE, and DU MAURIER—MR. FURNESS has not made himself beloved by the powers; the Scotch landscape painters, MR. DAVID MURRAY and MR. DAVID FARQUHARSON; MESSRS. KEELEY HALSWELLE, ALFRED EAST, and YEEND KING, the English *paysagistes*; MESSRS. ARTHUR MELVILLE and JAMES GUTHRIE, of the New Glasgow insurgents; and MESSRS. MORRIS, CRANE, BRITTEN, and others of the decorative arts, setting aside the claims of both architects and engravers.

MR. MORTIMER MENPES, who has recently returned from a tour in Cashmere, will occupy the Dowdeswell Gallery in mid-April with the results of his second trip to the East. His pictures, like his Japanese "memoranda," will consist chiefly of street-scenes. Some of them are very novel experiments on ivory. He painted chiefly inside his travelling-carriage, and says he has thus been enabled to put very much more sunshine into his pictures. He has almost invariably selected Asiatics of the lightest possible hue, finding anything approximating the negro ebony produced simply the effect of a black blot in the clear light. MISS KATE GREENAWAY will probably be exhibiting some of her work at the Fine Art Society's about the same time.

MR. P. WILSON STEER invited his friends last Saturday to the studio of MR. WALTER SICKERT, the recognised fighting editor of the New English Art Club, to see nine of his pictures prior to their despatch to the annual exhibition of the Société des Vingt de Bruxelles. MR. STEER is possessed of more talent than has sufficed to equip many an artist for a successful career, but he cannot quite decide how to bestow it. Some of his work reflects the influence of the most virile of French Impressionists, and some of it, again, mirrors some of the elegancies of ROSSETTI. In landscape MR. STEER displays a keen delight in the glow and fulness of Nature; in subject pictures he cultivates eccentricity rather than beauty. Like most of his school, he suffers from primitive notions with regard to perspective; and his figures, supposed to be standing or sitting on the flat, often look to be tobogganing down-hill. It is so with nearly all the N.E.A.C. men and those in sympathy with them, which is all the more regrettable as they are addicted to portentous foregrounds. The fault arises from their standing too near the subjects they put into their pictures, and being therefore obliged to look down to

paint part of them, and thus deal with things not in a plane parallel to their canvas. These faults are not observable in the works of MESSRS. ORCHARDSON and GREGORY, great lovers, both of them, of introductory expanses of floor and carpet. They draw back their easels to paint their grounds.

MR. C. P. SAINTON has recently completed a novel journey through France in a big red caravan, attended by one servant, who unfortunately died *en voyage* from influenza. His route, from Dieppe to Nice, lay through Rouen, Valence, Nevers, and Lyons; and he speaks of his gipsy-like experience as forming one of the happiest pages of his life. The fruit of this expedition is now on view and on sale at DOWDESWELL'S Galleries, and consists of a series of brilliant, and almost too gem-like—since in some cases they suggest mosaics—little oils, framed in a variation of the curious manner of mounting imported by MR. MENPES from Japan; and of exceedingly delicate “silver points.” His “silver points” are fair and dainty faces and figures adumbrated—on paper which has been coated with a surface of white chalk—by a piece of pointed silver. The process has this drawback—it admits of no erasures. All the work has to be executed in line—a method peculiarly attractive to MR. SAINTON, who is a pupil of PROFESSOR LEGROS. One of these drawings, an urchin standing by a bundle of hay, the artist calls “A Weird Snap.” He condescends to explain that this is American slang for a diminutive oddity. Broadly margined, and framed in white, these “silver points” furnish a delicate novelty.

LADIES in fragile evening dresses, attended of course by their cavaliers, visited the premises secured by *Black and White*, the forthcoming rival to the *Illustrated London News* and the *Graphic*, this week; and the printer's devil came into acute contact with Society *en grande tenue*. Society was in an inquisitive and experimental mood. It inspected those bewilderingly prolific novelties, the Augsburg machines, in the basement, elbowed the wood-engravers at work behind their magnifiers, set “copy” and pulled “galley” up-stairs, and added the heads of the electrotype men at work in the heated top storey with an intricate criss-cross of interrogation. It frequently expressed a Chicago-like determination to stay and see *Black and White* come in, in the form of the mental ideas of its staff, paper and ink, and go out an illustrated journal.

A CORRESPONDENT writes us from a Kent coast watering-place: “Skating on the upper reaches of the Thames, and the practical stoppage of traffic in the Port of London, are strange experiences; but I have had a stranger one to-day (Sunday, January 11th). There is no predicting the weather of the next month or the next fortnight, and, in the event of a sudden disappearance of the frost, I should like you, sir, to put it on record in THE SPEAKER that at the moment at which I am writing the sea is frozen here. I have just returned from a tramp on the beach. A fine sea-fog obscured the distant waters, but as far as the eye could stretch it ranged over a heaving mass of semi-solid ice. There was no strength in it, of course; my stick passed through it easily; but it withstood the impact of a good-sized stone, and I doubt whether a hot coal would have burned its way through the thickest of the blocks. It was actual ice, irregular of surface, and varying in density here and there; but a genuine frozen sea for all that. With the rustle of the imprisoned waters beneath, the momentary cracking of the masses as they were swayed to and fro, the mist in front, and the white cliffs behind, the scene was as nearly arctic as any that is likely to be witnessed in the England of our generation.”

If housekeepers are in earnest in wishing to benefit the unemployed in East London, they should buy BRYANT & MAY'S Matches, and refuse the foreign matches which are depriving the workers in East London of a large amount in weekly wages.

THE same correspondent, writing a day later, says: “At high tide this morning masses of ice, some of them from four to six inches in thickness, and measuring several yards across, were jolting one another all along the shore; and for a distance of from half to two-thirds of a mile from the coast, the ice-sheet extended; uneven, broken, and diversified, but claiming and asserting mastery over the waters. A Thames steamer would probably have been cut to pieces had she attempted to plough her way through it for any length of time. I asked an old boatman on the beach whether he had ever seen the like of it. Not for half a century, he said; but he remembered a winter fifty years ago, when an uncle of his had walked on solid ice from the shore to the end of the old pier (now disused and broken), a distance of three-quarters of a mile, shooting seagulls.”

CARAMENCITA and OTERO, two Andalusian dancers, have enthralled America. The former, it appears, is an exquisite electric storm; the latter a rich, voluptuous calm. CARAMENCITA'S motions are as swift as leaping flame, with an infallible and audacious grace that warms and exhilarates the blood like fairy wine. To OTERO dancing is an enjoyment, not a passion; she possesses the art, the art does not possess her. These Spanish wonders are in America, and there the Americans mean to keep them. They have been admitted duty-free, to the utter annihilation of the American terpsichorean industry; but the tariff on their exportation is prohibitive. In short, it is a new Spanish conquest of America. The Inquisition is established, and the victims not only crowd to the sacrifice, but pay the inquisitors well for their trouble. “It is poetry, MARGARET”—“Religion, RALPH!” was well enough; but to say so in five pages is like trying to play “Yankee-doodle” on the spheres.

#### THE FAMILY TIE.

THIS is the story of a man who hearkened to his father and mother; and the wickedness that came of it.

His name was Comyns—Bob Comyns—and at school we called each other friend. He wore an ingenuous face, wrote Latin verses of slightly unusual merit, and bowled with a break from the off which meant that there was genius somewhere inside him. When once collared, his bowling became futile: success made it deadly. On the whole he was a good fellow, with one soft spot in him, which showed later on: though, looking back, I seem to have guessed the mischief during a week of the Christmas holidays that we spent together at his home. I remember having an odd conviction when I drove away that, as soon as my cab had turned the corner, his father and mother would retire and lift their voices in thanksgiving.

They were people into whose heads no doubt ever penetrated. Their religious beliefs, their duties, and the proper conduct of life, stood as plain before them as their front gate, and as narrow as the Mohammedan's bridge over hell. They loved Bob—who of four children was the only son—and firmly meant to do their best for him. As they knew what was best for him, it followed that Bob must conform. Now filial love and obedience are both sweet and blessed: only there happens to be too much of them in the world. When all secrets are known, and the host of sons who have been ruined by their mothers stands over against the host of those who have been saved, I fancy that one very common opinion will want revision. Anyhow, Bob loved his parents, and learned to lean on them; and now he wants to see their ghosts for a few minutes, just to thank them.

Bob's father was a solicitor with a large practice which Bob had to inherit, and consented to inherit, without question. He had a sneaking desire to follow me to Oxford—where he would have enjoyed



a wholesomely small amount of my companionship, because they sent me down in my second year: but his father "did not wish to expose him to the temptations which beset young men at the Universities"—that was the very text—and preferred to keep his son under his own eye in the seclusion of a small provincial town. To a young man in Dick's position there usually happens one of two things. Either he takes to drink, or to discreditable essays in love-making—methods of killing time which occur to everybody who is being shielded from temptation. Dick did not drink: there was a certain sanity in the fellow that kept him from it. Instead, he spent his evenings at home; listened to his parents' talk; accepted their opinions on human conduct and affairs; and tumbled honourably in love with his sisters' governess.

It happened quite simply. The governess was about a year older than Bob, good to look at, and the only being who understood what ailed Bob's soul during this time. She was in prison herself, poor thing. Mrs. Comyns asserted afterwards that Miss Ormiston had "deliberately set herself to inveigle" the boy; but here Mrs. Comyns—was mistaken. As a matter of fact, Bob, having discovered a being obliging and intelligent enough to listen, dinned the story of his aspirations into the girl's ear with the persistent egoism of a hobbledehoy. When, a week after his twenty-first birthday and immediately after a peevish harangue, he looked into Miss Ormiston's grey eyes and felt something take him by the throat, the few words he proceeded to blurt out stunned him much as if a grenade had exploded close at hand. But when Miss Ormiston burst into tears and declared she must go up-stairs at once to pack her box, Bob recovered, and looking about, found the face of the world curiously changed. There were valleys where hills had stood a moment before.

"I'll go at once and tell my father," he said, drawing a full breath and looking like the man he was for the moment.

"And I'll go at once and pack my box," Miss Ormiston sobbed. This was prudent, for as soon as Bob's interview with his father was over, she was commanded to leave the premises in time to catch the early train next morning.

Then the Comyns family sat down and talked to Bob.

They began by pooh-poohing the affair. Then they talked of disgrace, and of scratching his name out of the family Bible, and said they would rather follow him to his grave than see him married to Miss Ormiston. Lastly, Mrs. Comyns asked Bob who had nursed him, and taught him to walk and read, and know virtue when he saw it. Bob, in the words of the poet, replied, "My Mother." "Very well, then," said Mrs. Comyns.

Now you and I know that when a man has pledged his future to a woman it is, in nine cases out of ten, not only honourable but expedient for him to snap his fingers at the family Bible: that a boy under these conditions can only win manhood by flying in the face of his training: and that his risks of making a dire mistake are as nothing to the peril of letting his parents decide. Bob's difficulty is, I believe, a very common one. Novelists prefer the young woman who renounces the man on whom her heart is set, because her friend or sister is in love with him, and so makes three lives miserable instead of one. But Bob's is a more usual case.

He wrote to Miss Ormiston saying, "My father's indignation is natural and can only be conquered by time. But I love you always."

Miss Ormiston replied, "Your father's indignation is natural, perhaps. But if you love me, it might be conquered by something else," or words to that effect. At any rate, her letter implied that as it was Bob, and not his father, who proposed to make her a wife, it was on Bob, and not on his father, that she laid the responsibility of fulfilling the promise.

But Bob was weak as water. Love had given him one brief glimpse of the real world: then his father and mother began to talk, and the gates closed again. At the end of a week he wrote—"Nothing shall shake me, dear Ethel. Still, some consideration is due to them; for I am their only son."

To this Ethel Ormiston sent no answer; but reflected "and what consideration is due to me? for you are my only lover."

For a while Bob thought of enlisting, and then of earning an honest wage as a farm-labourer: but rejected both notions, because his training had not taught him that independence is better than respectability—yea, than much broadcloth. It was not that he hankered after the fleshpots, but that he had no conception of a world without fleshpots. In the end his father came to him and said—

"Will you give up this girl?"

And Bob answered—

"I'm sorry, father: but I can't."

"Very well. Rather than see this shame brought on the family, I will send you out to Australia. I have written to my friend Morris, at Ballawag, New South Wales, three hundred miles from Sydney, and he is ready to take you into his office. You have broken my heart and your mother's and you must go."

And Bob—this man of twenty-one and more—actually obeyed his father in this, and went. I can almost forgive him, knowing how the filial habit blinds a man. But I cannot forgive the letter he wrote to Miss Ormiston—whom he wished to make his wife, please remember. Nevertheless she forgave it, as the tale will show. In the meantime she had found another situation, and worked on. Her parents were dead.

Five years passed, and Bob's mother died: twelve years, and his father died also, leaving him the lion's share of the money. During this time Bob had worked away at Ballawag and earned enough to set up as lawyer on his own account. But because a man cannot play fast and loose with the self-will that God gave him and afterwards expect to do much in the world, he was a moderately unsuccessful man still when the inheritance dropped in. It gave him a fat income for life. When the letter containing the news reached him, he left the office, walked back to his house, and began to think. Then he unlocked his safe and took out Ethel Ormiston's letters. They made no great heap: for of late their correspondence had dwindled to an annual exchange of good wishes at Christmas. She was still earning her livelihood as a governess.

Bob thought for a week, and then wrote. He asked Ethel Ormiston to come out and be his wife. You will observe that the old curse still lay on him. A man—even a poor one—that was worth kicking would have gone and fetched her; and Bob had plenty of money. But he asked her to come out and begged her to cable "Yes" or "No."

She cabled "Yes." She would start within the month from Plymouth, in the sailing-ship *Harvester*. She chose a sailing-ship because it was cheaper.

So Bob travelled down to Sydney to welcome his bride. He stepped on the *Harvester's* deck within five minutes of her arrival, and asked if a Miss Ormiston were on board. There advanced a middle-aged woman, gaunt, wrinkled and unlovely—not the woman he had chosen, but the woman he had made.

"God in Heaven!" he cried, leaning back against the bulwarks, "Are you Ethel?"

"God forgive you, Bob; I am."

She uttered no word about the change in him; but held out her hand, with a smile.

"Marry me, Bob, or send me back: I advise you to send me back. Twelve years back you might have been proud of me, and so I might have helped you. As it is, I have travelled far and am tired. I can never help you now."

And though he married her, her words were true.

Q.